

Reviews.

A HISTORY OF ROME, FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES TO THE DEATH OF COMMODUS, A. D. 192. By DR. LEONHARD SCHMITZ, F.R.S.E. New York: Harper and Brothers. Toronto: A. H. Armour & Co. 1851.

This volume is a most desirable companion to the work by the same author reviewed by us recently, and like it is destined, we predict, to enjoy a long career of usefulness, as a medium of instruction. For upwards of three quarters of a century, Goldsmith's abstract has been the source from which the youth of Great Britain have mainly derived their elementary knowledge of Roman story. That production, though entertaining as Robinson Crusoe, cannot aspire to a much higher degree of authority, as far as facts are concerned, than the inimitable romance of De Foe. The Doctor, "for shortness called Noll," (to quote Hannah More's kindly familiar line) retails with all the earnestness of unquestioning faith, Livy's most preposterous legends, never troubling his head to enquire whether truth was not enshrouded under allegory. Schmitz, on the other hand, whilst not neglectful of the dramatic points of his theme, digs much deeper beneath the surface, and presents us with the philosophy, as well as the poetry, of the annals of the most famous confederation of robbers and pirates which our world ever witnessed. He has not hesitated to avail himself largely of the labours of Niebuhr, who rendered the same service to the ancient records of Rome that Layard has to the architectural and artistic remains of Ninevah. The result is a history instead of a compendium of fables, and as such we cordially recommend it to the attention of our readers. We may add, that the very moderate price of the volume, five shillings, renders it one of the cheapest, as it assuredly is one of the most satisfactory manuals, which can be put into the hands of the student.

REPORT OF THE GENERAL PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION, 1851. New-York: Daniel Dana Jun.

With the current year will have passed away the fourth of a century since the origin of the excellent institution, whose annual report is now before us. That document is ably compiled, and embraces a history of the rise and progress of the Union which we have perused with much interest and pleasure. With sincere gratification we learn that the financial condition of the Society is sound, and that its means for publication have been greatly enlarged. As we have frequently had occasion to notice the books and tracts issued by the Union, it is almost unnecessary for us to state that their general character is such as to secure the confidence of every sound and sincere Churchman. Large supplies of them have been circulated in our Diocese, and have proved valuable additions to Sunday-school and Parochial libraries. To the report is prefixed a sermon by the Right Rev. the Bishop of Maryland, eloquently advocating the claims of the Union upon the Church; and appended is a list, respectable in extent, of works in the press, and to be ready before the close of the present month.

SCENES IN OUR PARISH.

NO. VII.

BLIND SARAH.

Concluded from our last.

At last, after an illness, it was thought reasonable to make her some allowance from the parish, and for some time no objection was made. But then we had a new overseer, a "little industrious man," as he calls himself, very energetic and always busy, who came into office with full purpose of rectifying all abuses, and full confidence in his powers to do so. He resolved that Sarah should have no more "parish pay," as it is called in these days, until she gave up her houses. I do not blame him as much as he is generally blamed,—right, I doubt not, was on his side; but for poor Sarah to part with the houses which her husband had thanked God that he had to leave her—O! it went near to break her heart. For a long time she would not yield, and during the many weeks in which no allowance was made her, she was reduced to great distress. At last want of bread made it necessary for her to give way. She sold her houses, and has been living on the price of them now nearly two years; but now the money is waxing very low, and when it is all gone, I suppose she must apply again to the parish, but they can give her very little, and her working days are over. I cannot tell how she will contrive to keep out of the workhouse, and to go in there would be a very great sorrow; for now she can receive her visitors, and smile when they admire the order of her little establishment; she can pack up her tea, sugar, &c. in her "ridicule," as she calls her old covered basket, and go to spend every afternoon with her crippled neighbour, the sailor's widow, and she can listen with pleased attention to the tracts which on such occasions, Mary reads to her; and she can take a turn in the fresh air or the sunshine, whenever she pleases. O what a charm there is in that!—to go out or come in when one will, no man making one afraid.

Not that I have a word to say against the keeper of our poor-house. But a poor-house is only one remove from a prison—so the poor think at least, and so they hate it. O! I hope poor Sarah will not be obliged to go there. But why should I trouble myself about it? she is not so anxious.—"I will surely do thee good," is the promise of God to his faithful servants, and "good will be the word of the Lord." I am sure none ever trusted in him and was confounded. The God of the gospel dispensation is the God of nature also, and that sweet Sunday evening's walk declared his truth to me, for according to his unfeigned promise the spring time was coming back again.

The moon which he set for certain seasons hung like a dim silver lamp in the eastern heaven before me, and the sun, which he taught to know his going down, cast the lengthening shadows across the ancient hills as he did six thousand years ago. I stopped at an open gate, and looked toward the long line of southern downs, and could plainly distinguish the outline of the grey Cairn on the summit. Man passes away, I thought, and his monument remains only to bid us ask, "who lies here?" But God says, "I am the same, I change not,"—and in whom is it that the Christian thus puts trust? In the Great Spirit of the American woods or the Being that Socinianism proposes to itself as an object of worship? O no, we feel whose "Spirit rules universal nature." "His who wore the platted thorns with bleeding brows." And O thou God and man! it is because thou, Jesus Christ art the same yesterday, to day, and forever, that we feel as David did, that we shall never see the righteous forsaken.

So it was with pleasant thoughts that I came quietly through the lanes and up the silent home-fields, and my remembrances of my friend Sarah further arranged themselves in the following verses which, by way of variety, I here offer to you:—

THE BLIND COMMUNICANT.

The mother led her sightless child
Forth, in the fields to play;
And cheer'd with voice of kindness mild,
Along her shadow'd way;
And gave her flowers of varied hue,
Which the blind child might never view.

But she grew up, and loved the song
Of the glad birds to hear;
And roam'd the scented heath along,
In spring time of the year.
But knew not how those flowers were fair,
Nor how the bright moths flutter there.

To childhood's voice, as still she grew,
That woman's heart would swell;
Yet the bright face she might not view,
Nor the young features tell;
But to her heart the form would strain,
And love the clasp, that press'd again.

But most she lov'd the one kind voice
That bade her glad heart bound;
One step, that made her soul rejoice
With its so well known sound.
She fancied what that form might be,
And loved the smile she could not see.

She never saw—nor sparkling ray,
Rainbow, nor morning's grace,
Nor brighter than Eve's brightest ray,
Affection's beaming face.
But yet to her one gleam was given
In earth's dim walk, a glance at Heaven.

For when the noon-day's glory bright,
Shone on the chalice fair,
On priestly vestment pure and white,
And she was kneeling there;
One moment on the quivering eye,
The holy light shone tremblingly.

O! blest through this dim world of ours.
To follow calmly still,
The star that shines on Zion's towers,
And lights up Judah's hill.
Undazzled by earth's meteor gleams,
Or bursting flowers, or sparkling streams.

O blest! with faith's unchanging gaze
That star alone to see—
And so, through this life's varied maze,
Press forward stedfastly;
Until, upon the strengthen'd sight,
Bursts forth in Heaven, the Lamb! the Light!

EXTRACT FROM A LETTER DESCRIBING A COUNTRY FUNERAL.

The day drags through, though storms keep out the sun;
And thus the heart will break, yet brokenly live on.

BYRON.

"You recollect John Rider at the mill. You cannot forget him, for many Sundays you and I used to watch him, walking up and down the green, waiting to catch the first glimpse of his old vicar, as the quiet couple, the grey haired priest and the slow paced steed, entered the distant avenue. We used to feel pleased at the respect and readiness with which John's services were tendered. Cannot you recall now the manner in which he so carefully assisted the infirm old gentleman to dismount, and then quietly took the bridle, and led the sober steed to his father's stable? You said he gave you exactly the idea of what a young English yeoman ought to be; and since that day I never looked on his tall and well-made figure, his handsome sunburnt face—I never observed the buoyancy of his step, the simple good-humour of his expression, without a feeling of pleasure at the thought, that he was my countryman; and I remarked his constancy in his place at Church, his orderly behaviour, his attention, with a yet deeper

feeling of interest—of hope that England has many such. These are but a few outward signs, indeed, such as might deceive; but hope is a blessed thing, and we have need of all the comfort hope can give now. Poor John is dead! his illness was raging fever, brought on by over exerting himself in the anxious time of a stormy hay harvest. I had known of his illness only two or three days, when on Wednesday I called to ask for him. I shall never forget the terror of his little sister's look, or her sudden burst of grief, when she heard her mother answer my question with an unnatural composure more affecting still—"God help us!" said she "the doctor can do no more for him!"

"As I turned to leave the house, and past the projecting angle of the barn, my eye rested on a face that showed more despair than his mother's, more agony than his sister's. There stood poor Amy Miles; she had evidently heard the news which had been told me—had been lingering about, I suppose, for the purpose of hearing it.

"She did not speak but hid her face in her apron and passed me like lightning. It struck me at the moment, that the last time I had seen poor Amy was one fair moonlight evening, standing in the little copse, that leads to her father's cottage; that the moment after, I met John in the lane, I remember, too, that I had been puzzled at the occurrence. You know these sort of matters always had a great charm for me; for I knew that the miller and the cottager were at law at the time; and beside, John Rider was a person of much more consequence in our little world than poor Amy Miles. Well! I was awakened on Thursday morning by the bell tolling muffled for John. It would exceed the bounds of my letter were I to attempt to describe to you the sad feelings of the survivors of our little circle, on this melancholy occasion. In so small a village as ours, you know, we feel something like one large family; and for poor Rider in particular—every one had known him from a child—every one could remember some good of him; and then he was his father's only son—and the grey stone under which he was laid yesterday, bears a long list, the names of his respectable ancestors from the date 1583; but when John's name and his father's—how sadly out of place after that of his healthy son—shall be engraved, there is not one left to continue the race. 'Tis all well!' said the old man, as he turned from the grave yesterday, 'there's never been any stain on the credit of my family, the last,' he looked toward the open vault, but could not bring himself to name his last child—the last has carried a fair name to his grave with him—there can be none to dishonour us now.'

"It was the most affecting of the many affecting funerals that I have witnessed. Our little school-girls, generally careless enough on such occasions, stood now linked hand in hand, gazing on the flowers that were scattered about the pall, as seriously as if they felt the similarity between those withering beauties, and him who had come up and been so suddenly cut down. The poor father and mother were objects of deep pity to the whole congregation. The father never shed a tear, but stood with his eyes immovably fixed on the letters of his poor son's name on the coffin-plate, as if he felt it necessary to read the melancholy inscription over and over again, in order to convince himself of its truth. The mother, the poor mother! her behaviour was quite a contrast to what it had been on Wednesday. The flood gates seemed to be opened and the full tide of sorrow flowed forth. Her very heart seemed bursting. The maidens who, according to our country custom, attended as pall-bearers in white hoods and scarfs, were much affected, as well by the mother's intense distress as by the melancholy cause of their assembling: and as I looked at the young and graceful forms so bowed down with unaccustomed grief, the bright eyes so strangely dimmed with tears, a thought crossed my mind, silly enough, that perhaps he had left, as Cowper says, 'a heart-ache to one of them for a legacy.' But at that moment, when that most touching part of the service preparatory to the corpse being laid in the grave was read, just as the old clergyman's voice, trembling with emotion and yet so deep and solemn, that every word touched the hearer's heart, said, 'Man that is born of a woman, hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery'—Full of misery! O what true words! At that moment there was a sudden movement amongst the attentive throng. The little children shrunk back in fright, as a pale girl, not dressed in mourning—the world recognized no right that she had to mourn—but O, custom cannot bind heartfelt sorrow—rushed up the churchyard through the aisle; her dark hair loosened from the haste of her motion, the tears streaming down the pale cheeks, the whole dress disordered. She passed the mourners; the old clergyman paused in pity and astonishment, as with a wild and passionate cry which has sounded in my ears ever since, she sunk upon the coffin. Poor, poor Amy! God comfort her!"

SMYRNA.

Smyrna, the second of the Seven Churches of Asia, is mentioned next after Ephesus, probably because it was nearest to it. It is a very ancient city, situated on the east coast of Lydia, at the

extremity of a gulf called the gulf of Smyrna, and near the mouth of the river Meles. At a very early period of its history it was destroyed by the Lydians, and lay waste until the time of Alexander the Great. It was rebuilt about two miles north of the old city, and in the time of the first Roman Emperors was one of the finest cities of Asia, and was the court of justice for all the district of Æolis. Smyrna was in this prosperous condition when a Christian Church was founded here, the members of which, though poor in this world's goods, were rich in faith. It was foretold to them that they should suffer for the name of Christ, and have tribulation for ten days,² that is, prophetic years; a prophecy that was fulfilled during the persecution of Diocletian, which lasted for that time, and fell very heavily on this as on others of the Eastern Churches. But together with these tidings of coming adversity was coupled the comforting promise, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

In the year 170 the Church of Smyrna afforded an example of devotion to the faith which agrees nobly with the character given to it in the Sacred Volume. A persecution was raised by order of the Roman Emperor, and the chief magistrate of Smyrna was ordered to expose to wild beasts or to burn at the stake all those who professed the Christian religion. A number of persons accused of the crime of belonging to the hated sect were called on to deny their faith, and on their refusal they were cruelly tortured by scourging and being pierced with nails or thorns; but still continuing steadfast, they were thrown to wild beasts. Last of all, the aged Polycarp was brought forward, who, it is said, was a disciple of St. John, and had been appointed Bishop of Smyrna by the beloved Apostle. The Roman magistrate, moved at the affecting sight, and anxious to save the courageous old man, advised him to conceal his name, and offered to release him if he would but swear by the Emperor's good fortune, and defy Christ. Polycarp answered, "Fourscore and five years have I been His servant, yet in all this time hath He not so much as once hurt me; how, then, may I speak evil of my King and Sovereign Lord who hath brought me salvation?" The magistrate replied, "I have wild beasts to which I will throw thee, unless thou take a better way." This threat serving only to strengthen him in the way that he had chosen, the magistrate added, "I will tame thee with fire if thou heed not the wild beasts." Then said Polycarp, "You threaten me with fire, which shall burn for the space of an hour and shall be within a little while after put out and extinguished; but you know not the fire of the judgment to come, and of everlasting punishment, which is reserved for the wicked and ungodly. But why make all these delays? Give me what death soever you list." While standing at the stake, to which he was soon after bound, he uttered the following prayer. "O Father of Thy Well-Beloved and Blessed Son Jesus Christ, by Whom we have attained the knowledge of Thee, the God of angels and powers, and of every creature, and of all just men which live before Thee, I give Thee thanks that Thou hast vouchsafed to grant me this day that I may have my part among the number of martyrs in the cup of Christ, unto the resurrection of eternal life, both of body and soul, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, among whom I shall this day be received into Thy sight for an acceptable sacrifice: and as Thou hast prepared and revealed the same before this time, so Thou hast accomplished the same, O Thou most true God, which canst not lie. Wherefore, I in like case for all things praise Thee, and glorify Thee by our everlasting Bishop Jesus Christ, to Whom be glory evermore. Amen." Thus was this holy man faithful unto death; and who can doubt that there has been given to him a crown of life?

Smyrna was destroyed by an earthquake seven years after this event, but the Emperor Aurelius caused it to be rebuilt in more than its former splendour. It afterwards, however, repeatedly suffered from earthquakes. There are few places in the Turkish dominions which have, in proportion to their size, so great a population as Smyrna, and it is the most thriving town in the Levant, with respect both to export and import trade. It is a better built town than Constantinople, and is still improving, substantial stone houses being now generally erected instead of wooden buildings. The number of inhabitants amounts to about 130,000, among whom there is there is so large a population of Christians as to render the town unclean in the eyes of strict Mahometans, who call it Infidel Izmir, the latter name being a corruption of Smyrna. It stands at the foot of a range of mountains which enclose it on three sides. The only ancient ruins are upon the mountains behind the town and to the south. Upon the highest summit stand the ruins of an old castle, which are supposed to mark the site of the second city.

¹ Rev. ii. 9. I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich,) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.

² Rev. ii. 10. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.